DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 133 405 95 UD 016 662

AUTHOR Maldonado, Stephen
TITLE Programmatic Recommendations and Considerations in Assisting School Districts to Serve Vietnamese Children.
INSTITUTION Intercultural Development Research Association, San Antonio, Tex.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Sep 76
CONTRACT 300-75-0324
NOTE 17p.; IDRA Seminar Digest

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Asian Americans; Bilingual Education; Culture Conflict; *Educational Needs; *Educational Problems; Educational Programs; *Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; English (Second Language); *Indochinese; Language Handicaps; Program Development; Refugees; School Districts; *Secondary School Students
IDENTIFIERS Texas

ABSTRACT

The seminar reported here focused on identifying the needs and problems of Vietnamese children and adults. These included bilingual education, culture clash, second language programs, and educational differences between Vietnam and the U.S. It was observed that teachers must be prepared to respond to their Vietnamese students according to their geographic origins, the needs and desires of students' families, and the availability of curricular and human resources. Many Vietnamese parents believe that culturally pluralistic bilingual bicultural programs are needed to meet the needs of their children. Vietnamese parent-child relationships are quite different from American relationships. Contact with American culture is seen by many Vietnamese as threatening traditional family relationships. Furthermore, some Vietnamese parents fear that a continuous emphasis on English in the education of their children will make communication with them increasingly difficult. Language learning, skill learning, and job placement are important to the Vietnamese. Developers of language programs for Vietnamese should group students according to age, profession and marital status and should use Vietnamese people as instructors or as aides for non-Vietnamese teachers. Teachers must know the difference between the ways the English and Vietnamese languages function as tools for communication. (Author/JM)

Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original.

ED133405

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS IN ASSISTING SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO SERVE VIETNAMESE CHILDREN

IDRA Seminar Digest

Stephen Maldonado

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Intercultural Development Research Association
5835 Callaghan Rd. Suite 350-111
San Antonio, Texas 78228
September 1976

UD016662

This publication was produced pursuant to Contract Number 300-75-0324 from the U.S. Office of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein are solely those of Intercultural Development Research Association and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the U.S. Office of Education and no official endorsement by said agency should be inferred.

Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board
Mr. Fernando Pinon
Manging Editor,
The Laredo Times
P.O. Box 29
Laredo, Texas 78040

Vice-Chairperson
Mrs. Jan Coggeshall
President, Galveston League
of Women Voters
10 Dansby Drive
Galveston, Texas 77550

Secretary
Mrs. L. Debbie Haley
13430 Nitida
Houston, Texas 77045

Dr. Denzer Burke
Chairman, Texas Advisory Committee
to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
523 Third Street
Texarkana, Texas 75501

Mr. Leonel J. Castillo
Controller
City of Houston
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77001

Dr. James A. Forester
Director of Community &
Student Affairs
University of Texas at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas 78285

Dr. Gonzalo Garza
Deputy Superintendent
for General Instructional Services
Houston ISD
3830 Richmond
Houston, Texas 77027

Mr. Mike Hernandez, Jr.
Attorney
427 S. St. Mary's
San Antonio, Texas 78204

Dr. Mamie McKnight
Instructor
El Centro College
801 Main
Dallas, Texas 75207

Mr. Mauro Reyna
Assistant Superintendent
Education Development
Austin ISD
6100 N. Guadalupe
Austin, Texas 78753

Mr. Lanny Sinkin
Managing Editor,
The River City Times
523 E. Craig
San Antonio, Texas 78212

Mr. William R. Sinkin
Chairman,
Texas State Bank
P.O. Box 20100
San Antonio, Texas 78220

Mr. Jesse Trevino
President, Board of Trustees
McAllen ISD
113 S. Broadway
McAllen, Texas 78501

Ms. Martha Valdez
Elementary Supervisor
Ysleta ISD
8445 Valdespino
El Paso, Texas 79907

Dr. Jose A. Cardenas
Executive Director

IDRA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, the purpose of which is to provide information to the general public concerning equality of educational opportunity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

INTRODUCTION 2

ESTABLISHING A NEED 3

BILINGUAL EDUCATION 3

CULTURE CLASH 5

SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS 6

THE VIETNAMESE CHILD 8

EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES 9

CONCLUSION 11

PREFACE

We at IDRA are grateful for the assistance from the four Vietnamese educators whose thoughts and philosophies are reflected in the following pages. Even though the focus of the seminar was on the needs of public school Vietnamese children, many issues were raised regarding the immediate needs of the adult Vietnamese community. Ideas and suggestions made during the seminar focused not only on the academic needs of children but also on their emotional and societal needs. We hope that the following summary of the seminar proceedings will be of assistance in opening the doors of communication.

The recommendations presented in this summary should be viewed as alternative responses which seem to be more humanistic and amenable to situational differences in education than the rigid prescriptive approach which does not make provisions for adjustment.

This seminar report has been prepared as one approach in an effort to develop school district capability to respond to the needs of children of limited English-speaking ability by the Center for the Management of Innovation in Multicultural Education, a division of Intercultural Development Research Association.

INTRODUCTION

Four nationally known Vietnamese educators assisted IDRA June 28, 1976 in conducting a seminar to acquaint staff with information and suggestions from which programmatic recommendations could be formulated in assisting school districts that will serve Vietnamese children during the forthcoming academic year. The educators were: Tang Thi Thanh Van, a consultant with the National Resource Center at the University of Southern Louisiana in Lafayette; Dr. Do Ba Khe, a distinguished educator in both his native country of Vietnam and at his present position with the Institute for Cultural Pluralism at San Diego State University; Le Ba Kong, who compiled and published the first English-Vietnamese, Vietnamese-English dictionary as well as numerous other books; and Reverend Dominic Nguyen Thanh Binh, the revered director of the Vietnamese American Cultural Center in San Antonio. Mrs. Mary Turk, Superivisor for the Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas, Hang Tran and Toan Le consultants to ongoing IDRA activities also participated in the seminar.

ESTABLISHING A NEED

Dr. Blandina Cardenas, director of the Center for the Management of Innovation in Multicultural Education (MIME), observed that there is a need for alternative responses that are compatible with the children they will serve because of three identifiable factors:

(1) the differences in concentration of the Vietnamese from one geographical location to another;

(2) the needs and desires of the Vietnamese family; and

(3) the availability of curricular and human resources.

Dr. Jose A. Cardenas, executive director of IDRA, called for an identification of the ethnic characteristics of the Vietnamese child for better understanding by the teacher so that necessary adjustments can be made. He also noted that it is essential that the Vietnamese student be assisted in understanding the American system of education as well as his new environment.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The consultants agreed that the Vietnamese culture and the Vietnamese language cannot be dichotomized. They therefore advocated the belief of the Vietnamese community that a culturally pluralistic bilingual bicultural program

which sanctions maintenance of their honored and complex culture and language is a desireable and feasible projection for responding to the needs of their children.

"We (the Vietnamese community) need and want a bilingual bicultural program," says Dr. Khe, "but in order to convince Washington that we are eager to preserve our (Vietnamese) culture, we will need to provide verifiable data from the Vietnamese community." Dr. Khe is currently working with the Institute of Cultural Pluralism at San Diego State University in developing an instrument to assess the home language, language dominance, and an evaluation of educational needs. He apsires to prove with sufficient verifiable data that there does exist a need and a desire for bilingual education.

Staff member Dr. Kay Caragonne further added that in terms of all linguistically different children ". . . Bilingual education should not only be viewed as a method of solving linguistic problems but also that it can be used to enrich one's life. Bilingual Bicultural education should also be viewed in that perspective. It can encourage full participation in life and help the school to help the child recognize himself as a unique (and important) individual."

They emphasized that there is no contradiction between the necessity to learn English and their desire for a bilingual bicultural program. Implementation of a Viet-

namese bilingual bicultural program would be a means of recognizing that Vietnamese culture is a positive asset to the United States.

A common sentiment made during the seminar was that the Vietnamese are anxious to learn English and to become contributing Americans, but that they in no way wish to become an invisible element in the so-called "American melting pot."

CULTURE CLASH

Le Ba Kong narrated the horrors of Vietnamese families upon watching such television programs as "Welcome Back Kotter." Some Vietnamese parents are afraid that their children will adopt the patterns of behavior reflected on prime time television. Illustrating another cultural characteristic, Mr. Kong commented on the difference in family relationships. He stated strongly that he was a father to his son and not a "buddy". Vietnamese fathers and sons show love through respect and through respect they uphold a traditional credo of ancestral worship. Because of linguistic and cultural complexities it becomes increasingly evident that Vietnamese parents participate meaningfully in bringing about reciprocity between the needs of the Vietnamese child and the mandates of the school.

Some Vietnamese parents, for example, feel that a continuous ESL program may eventually cause problems of communication between them and their children. It is conceivable said Kong, that a young child immersed in ESL may eventually become English dominant, go away to college or to work and write his parents in English. It is observed that adults have greater difficulty in second language acquisition and, therefore, cannot keep pace with their offspring. It is therefore conceivable that parents may require help in communicating with their own children (as do other ethnically and linguistically different parents).

SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

Emphasizing the needs of the total Vietnamese community, Dr. Khe stated that there are three priorities in the Vietnamese community: (1) language learning for survival sake, (2) skill learning, and (3) job placement. Steps two and three are obviously contingent upon language acquisition.

Mr. Kong said that there are three major considerations to a successful language program for Vietnamese. The first is special grouping according to age, profession and marital status. The grouping according to age is consistent with current educational practice. Grouping

according to profession, however, may be objectionable to some American educators but acceptable according to Vietnamese culture. The fisherman, for example, may feel uncomfortable and inhibited in the presence of a professional. Classification according to marital status also reflects a cultural requisite. Husbands and wives may not like being placed in the same class. In deference to her spouse, a wife may be hesitant in class so as not to overshadow the progress and ability of her husband. It was also suggested that schools respond to children not only by age and skills but also on cultural footnote; is the child from an urban city or from a rural village?

The second consideration is that the teacher have a basic knowledge of the difference between English and Vietnamese. According to Mr. Kong, Vietnamese is an analytic language because it does not have inflection of verbs, adjectives or nouns. For example, the sentence - Sky blue - satisfies the syntactical structure of the English - The sky is blue. Careful consideration should also be given to pronunciation. The Vietnamese language employs a variety of diacritical marks that establish how a vowel is to be pronounced and also what meaning the word will have. For example, co-to shrink, có - to exist or have, cò - stork, cỏ - herb, cọ - to rub, and cô - young unmarried lady. Many Vietnamese speakers will therefore have difficulty in pronunciation because of what they may view as a deficiency in the English language.

The third consideration for a successful language acquisition program is the use of Vietnamese professionals or paraprofessionals as instructors or as facilitators for a non-Vietnamese teacher. A Vietnamese teacher or assistant will certainly be valuable as a material developer and also for sensitizing school personnel to Vietnamese culture and language. The educational system should also be examining methods or alternatives of certifying Vietnamese professionals and parents to act as aides and teachers in the classroom, and as counselors and administrators.

Education enjoys an exalted status in Vietnamese culture. Upon recognizing the basic cultural and linguistic differences of the Vietnamese people, educators will find them willing students.

THE VIETNAMESE CHILD

Vietnamese students who have already been a part of the educational process have been generally praised in glowing terms. These generalizations about how rosy everything is for the Vietnamese student are over simplistic and may create stereotypes that may prove burdensome in the future.

The panel also agreed that the Vietnamese child is generally what we would call a "good student" in terms of behavior and academic aggressiveness. These characteristics are due mostly to the status that education and educators enjoy in the home culture. It should be noted, however, that these students have specific needs according to age group that are not dissimilar to other linguistically different children. Serious adjustment problems at the lower grades have been minimal, but those children in middle school and high school have more difficulty adjusting to the mode of instruction and to the sociological changes demanded of them.

EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Preschool and kindergarten programs may be new concepts to many Vietnamese parents. Some private schools had initiated preschools after the Montesorri and other models but they seemed to be neglected by the Vietnamese government. Dr. Khe said that when he was at the Ministry of Education a need for kindergarten was recognized, but because of the financial burden of war, the program had to be given low priority.

A striking difference that causes difficulty for students at middle schools and high schools is curriculum

selection. Vietnamese children are not accustomed to selecting courses as is done at the upper levels. Ms. Tang Thi Thanh Van recommended that school counselors take special care in explaining the credit system to both Vietnamese students and their parents. She went on to suggest that a pamphlet be developed in Vietnamese outlining the number of courses required, the elective choices, grading, etc.

There is also a difference in teaching strategy between the Vietnamese educational system and the American one. Vietnamese children did not carry a set of books to or from school as do American students. Books are a scarce commodity in Vietnam as they are in many parts of the world. Because of the dearth of books and other expendable instructional items, the Vietnamese student is accustomed to learning by the rote method; listening, memorization and repetition.

The teacher of Vietnamese children, however, can capitalize on that system by using it as a bridge to the current eclectic approach found in American classrooms. Insistence on immediate conversion to a pedagogical methodology unfamiliar to Vietnamese children only creates frustration and humiliation. The shift should be a gradual one. Usage of the rote system should not be utilized as a crutch but only as a means of "climatizing" students to a new experience in learning.

Ms. Van went on to suggest that teachers of Vietnamese children be provided with workshops to familiarize them with the differences and similarities between the educational systems.

CONCLUSION

It should be carefully considered that the Vietnamese child brings with him a collection of experiences ranging from delight to the horrible nightmares of war which even adults find hard to endure. The child comes to his new country not as a victor, not as a tourist, nor as an emigrant, but as a refugee, a title many Vietnmese newcomers have already learned to abhor.

There was another message from our distinguised and honorable consultants. "We are not refugees. We are not parolees. We are not Indo-Chinese. We are Vietnamese. One day we will gain American citizenship and then we will become Vietnamese Americans."

America's newest arrivals bring with them hopes, fears and courage characterized by an unusual page in American history.

A list of IDRA publications is available upon request.

Intercultural Development
Research Association
5835 Callaghan, Suite 350-111
San Antonio, Texas 78228
(512) 684-8180

Cover Illustration by Edward Maldonado